

Lesson Idea Comparison

(To be completed after viewing slide 19 and 20)

Lesson Ideas

Topic	Competency	Language Skill	Activity

Cooperative Reading Activity Handout

Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL

Introduction:

In the spring of 2000, the ESL/ESOL Workgroup began the process of brainstorming, designing, and developing the *Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL*. The group began by gathering, comparing, and contrasting models that had been developed in states such as Arizona, New York, Colorado, Massachusetts, and Florida. While some states have provided very detailed standards and curricula, the members of the workgroup decided that Maryland's Content Standards should be a resource, not a prescription, for all programs across the state. Updates were included in 2005 to explain how this document is appropriate as a framework for EL/Civic instruction. Additional updates have been completed to comply with federal guidelines.

English Literacy and Civics Education, (EL/Civics) as defined in the Federal Register dated November 17, 1999 is an instructional program that teaches life skills with the intent that students will become successful workers, parents, family members, and citizens. To participate in American life, individuals must learn English in context to understand and navigate governmental, educational, and workplace systems and key institutions such as banking and health care. This document was designed to implement instruction as described in the Federal Register.

Two labels are commonly used to identify programs which teach English to nonnative speakers: ESL: English as a Second Language and ESOL: English for Speakers of Other Languages. Both are equally understandable and acceptable. The workgroup resolved to use both labels in order to be inclusive. The content standards are reviewed and revised frequently and the latest revised edition is available on the Maryland Adult Literacy Resource Center website, www.umbc.edu/alrc.

Workgroup Members:

The workgroup consists of members representing a variety of programs across the state. Members of the ESL/ESOL Workgroup knew the *Maryland Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL* had to take into consideration the incredible diversity of programs and the learner population. Some programs serve in large metropolitan and suburban areas while others work in rural areas, and many programs work with transient or seasonal populations. Some programs serve fewer than twenty ESL/ESOL learners while others serve thousands. Some learners enter programs with advanced university degrees while others enter with very limited educational experiences. The Workgroup also noted that some local programs had curriculum in place while others left the responsibility of curriculum development up to individual instructors.

Background Information:

In 1999, MSDE published the *Maryland Adult ESL Program Standards* to help identify the important variables in a quality adult ESL/ESOL program and to provide guidelines for developing new programs.

In the fall of 2001, MSDE reviewed and reorganized the Adult ESL Program Standards into five components applicable for all adult education programs:

- Program Management and Leadership
- Recruitment, Orientation, Intake
- Assessment, Curriculum, Instruction
- Retention, Transition, Support Services
- Professional Development

Defining Content Standards:

The Content Standards for Adult ESL/ESOL are designed to help programs with the third component: Assessment, Curriculum and Instruction, and define "everything a student should know and be able to do". In other words, content standards describe the range of desirable knowledge and skills within a subject area (National Council on Education Standards and Testing, 1992).

Given the incredible diversity of programs and learners across the state, workgroup members realized that there could never be one prescribed curriculum for all programs. Curriculum development is a task that requires knowledge of local needs and, therefore, is best done at the local program level.

The standards are written in the form of a general outline so that local programs and instructors will be able to develop curriculum, plan instruction, and design classes to meet the local and individual needs. And, since many adult ESL/ESOL instructors teach part-time and are new to the field, the workgroup wanted to create a document that would be practical and user-friendly for both experienced and inexperienced instructors.

Purpose of the Content Standards:

The content standards were designed with these five purposes:

1. **Consistency:** The Content Standards outline the language skills for each proficiency level within a program and across programs in the state.

2. **State Performance Measures:** The federal mandate for “accountability” requires state and local programs to continually improve performance in terms of moving learners to higher levels of proficiency. Performance reporting must be based on the National Reporting System, which describes the levels of proficiency and provides test benchmarks for standardized tests such as CASAS, BEST Plus, and BEST literacy.
3. **Assessment to Curriculum and Instruction:** Local programs use two types of assessment: formal (standardized tests) and informal (goal attainment, interest inventories, monitoring progress and evaluation). Assessment information allows the program to identify the topics and skills the students’ need and to plan effective instruction.
4. **Orient New Teachers:** Content Standards outline the proficiency and language skills for each level.
5. **Reference for Experienced Instructors:** Tabbed sections provide additional lists of skills for instructors to expand and enrich courses.

Local programs and individual instructors can design curriculum based on the standards and supplementary material. Programs should maintain the Content Standards as a complete document that addresses all the elements of effective instruction which includes both language skills and content area skills. The following are key objectives for ESL instructors taken from the *Maryland Adult ESL Program Standards*. Using the content standards as a framework for instruction, instructors are expected to:

- *Develop the learner’s English literacy skills, including speaking, reading, writing and understanding the English language.*
- *Reflect the learner’s goals while considering their roles as family members, community participants, workers and lifelong learners.*
- *Provide learners with the skills to apply English accurately and appropriately in a variety of home, community, workplace and academic settings.*
- *Use assessment activities to document the learner’s progress toward advancement to other training programs, employment, post-secondary education, self-sufficiency, attainment of a secondary school diploma, and other goals.*
- *Integrate second language acquisition with relevant life experiences by emphasizing development of critical thinking, problem solving and other culturally-specific skills necessary for self-sufficiency.*
- *Provide a non-threatening learning environment that respects adult ESL learners and integrates their cultural backgrounds and experiences into the instructional process.*

The Content Standards Package:

The *Maryland Content Standards for Adults ESL/ESOL* provides assistance to both programs and instructors in the following ways:

For programs:

- Training module to introduce the standards to staff
- State guidelines for language skills for each level
- Guidelines and resources for curriculum and unit development

For instructors:

- Description of each proficiency level and benchmarks
- Guidelines for identifying skills and learning contexts for each class
- Outline of language skills
- Resource lists
- Sample unit and lesson plans
- “Ten Strategies for Success”

The Content Standards Components:

Although there are many sections in the document, the two main components for the Content Standards include the language skills the learner needs to be successful and the context to teach the language skills.

Language Skills Sections:

The Content Standards address the six language skills in two different formats. The oral and aural skills are paired together. Pronunciation should always be integrated into listening and speaking instruction to provide both the receptive practice and the productive practice necessary to improve pronunciation and to make an ESL/ESOL student more easily understood.

Reading, writing, and grammar are also grouped together. Reading and writing function as a pair. Grammar is naturally integrated into writing instruction, but its role in all elements of language use (especially speaking) cannot be ignored. Grammar instruction should be well-rounded to include modeling and direct instruction with some meaningful drills, a variety of oral or written practice activities, and games. Grammar can (and should) be contextualized and fun!

Pronunciation is an integral part of speaking, just as grammar is integral to writing and speaking. As such, pronunciation and grammar will usually be incorporated into instruction of the other language skills. In the past, instructors “drilled” or practiced the skills for their own sake, but current methodology strives for presentation and practice of language skills in real-life situations.

There’s an old adage, “All language use is practice, but not all language practice is language use.”

1. **Content Standards by Level:** Under this tab, a description of a learner's proficiency at "entry" in a level is provided with a range of test scores for that level. The National Reporting System (NRS) provides a brief description of what a learner can do -- Listening/Speaking, Reading/Writing, and Functional Workplace Skills.

The National Reporting System, (NRS) guides adult education programs on the functioning level of students for reporting purposes and provides a descriptor of the students' abilities at each of the six levels. The NRS Level Descriptors found in the Content Standards by Level section give the instructor an overview of a student's level. It also functions as a tool for lesson planning.

The benchmarks are the assessment scores that help to determine where a student is placed. Scores correspond to the CASAS, BEST Literacy and BEST Plus which are the state mandated assessment instruments for pre- and post testing. The SPL (Student Performance Level) correlations are provided since many other states have adopted or are familiar with those descriptors. The NRS descriptors are important so that all states are reporting on student progress, which is measured by student completion of a level, through the use of common level descriptions.

The proficiency descriptors help to paint a picture of the learner's skills in various arenas, including the workplace. These are of course, general, representative descriptions and can never capture all the variances among real learners. And, as all experienced language instructors know, there may be a wide discrepancy between a learner's speaking/listening skills and his or her reading/writing skills.

Length of time in the U.S. exposure to English opportunities outside the classroom, educational background in the native country and possibly even learning disabilities are all factors that instructors have to take into consideration when planning instruction.

2. **Content Standards by Skills:** This section is helpful for instructors who teach multi-level class or have learners who are stronger in specific skill areas. The layout provides instructors the standards for each skill from Beginning Literacy through Advanced. Standards by Skill have a sequenced list of skills from beginning to advanced. For example, if some learners in the class have strong literacy skills, the instructor can consult the Reading and Writing Skills list to identify higher level skills in those areas.

Content Area Skills: Competencies, Cultural Notes, Workplace Skills, Technology Skills, Metacognitive Skills

These sections are to help instructors outline the content and context for the course. The process of conducting needs assessments both formal and informal and synthesizing the resulting data provides the instructor with an opportunity to get to know the learners better and to discover their individual interests, goals, and strengths. The entire process of learner self-assessment is, in itself, a valuable metacognitive or learning to learn skill and worthy of class time.

3. **Competencies:** Included in this document are the CASAS and MELT. The CASAS competencies were developed by CASAS and correlate to their testing system. MELT refers to the Mainstream English Language Training Project that established Performance-Based Curriculum and Outcomes for adult refugee English language training programs in the 1980's and was funded by the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement. Many programs use these in correlation with the BEST, BEST Literacy or BEST Plus assessments. The Best and BEST Literacy were developed in the same time frame for the same purpose. Because Maryland uses the CASAS, BEST Literacy, and BEST Plus these competencies were included to aid instructors in planning instruction. Programs might also consider the Equipped for the Future (EFF) framework to identify skills and activities.
4. **Cultural Notes:** A list of topics and recommended activities is included for incorporating cultural learning into the classroom.
5. **Workplace Skills:** This section was developed from SCANS (the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills) U.S. Department of Labor, 1991. They fall into three categories:
 - Basic skills: Read, write, do math, listen, speak.
 - Thinking skills: Think creatively, make decisions, solve problems, visualize, know how to learn, and reason.
 - Personal Qualities: Display responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, integrity, and honesty.
6. **Technology Skills:** Compiled by the MSDE Technology planning group to help instructors include technology in their instruction. The technology section includes both "low end" (using a tape player) "high end" (using the Internet for a research project) skills.
7. **Metacognitive Skills:** These skills are not aligned to any particular proficiency level, but are sequenced within three broad categories:
 - Learning Goals,
 - Learning Styles
 - Evaluating Ones Own Learning.

These sections can be the starting point for planning contextualized instruction. Adult learners learn more effectively when learning reflects the context of their lives. In other words, if a learner wants to write better, it is much more effective to help him or her write a real note to a boss, neighbor or teacher than to write a sterile academic assignment.

Utilizing the Content Standards to Provide Effective Instruction:

Standards based instruction allows instructors and learners to understand the concepts and skills that need to be mastered at each level. In addition, standards based education provides a common language for instructors across the state to discuss approaches and practices that are effective at each level of proficiency. Expectations for learners can be clearly articulated, and in a standards-based classroom, learners are involved in challenging activities that are reflective of the standards. Often times these activities include problem solving, summarizing, comparing and contrasting, describing, demonstrating, evaluating, analyzing, discussing, and applying the newly acquired content. Standards-based instruction defines what the learner will know and be able to do. Effective instructors are aware of different learning styles and provide a balance of whole group, small group/pair, and individual instruction. Whole group instruction is often used to brainstorm or present new material.

Assessment, Curriculum and Instruction should be viewed as an integrated process – we can't have one part without the others. All components are equally important in meeting the learners' needs and therefore, evaluating and revising the components are essential for program effectiveness.

Curriculum is based on needs and results of the assessment process. It outlines the objectives and skills that learners need to meet their goals, to develop necessary skills, to move from one level to another, and to transfer their learning from the classroom to life. Curriculum is the link between assessment and instruction. Curriculum is a very broad term and is usually developed on a local level, and it outlines the timeframe, objectives and skills for both the instructor and learner. Within the curriculum are units that address specific goals. Instructors use the units to guide lesson planning. Units vary in length from one week to several weeks. Lesson plans are for one class meeting and have specific objectives and outcomes. Unit and lesson plans should continually integrate cultural, workplace, and technology skills with language development. Effective instructors use a variety of materials – textbooks, video/audio, computer-based, and realia to address student learning styles and for transferring learning beyond the classroom.

The curriculum is our roadmap or guide to instruction – the heart of a program. Effective instruction helps adult learners gain the skills, knowledge, and attitudes to be successful participants in a rapidly changing world. The sections titled, Sample Unit and Sample Lesson Plan will provide you a model of each with additional explanations.

Assessment is both a formal and informal process that guides educational planning among stakeholders – learners, educators, employers, community leaders, and service providers. The assessment results directly affect curriculum development and classroom instruction.

Assessment can be viewed as a three-step process.

- Conduct placement testing and assign level.
- Within a class, review the test results to identify the common areas of weakness and strengths (e.g., complete a CASAS class profile).
- Conduct an in-class needs assessment to identify the individual goals and interests of the learners.

Instructor-generated informal assessments will help ascertain if students are meeting the objectives and working towards reaching their goals. Often the informal assessments will lead to adjustments in the unit or lesson plans and instructional approaches may be altered. Monitoring and evaluation are part of ongoing assessment. It can be both formal and informal. It should be as non-threatening as possible. And it is essential that learners at all levels are included in assessing their own progress.

Sample monitoring and evaluation strategies include:

- Checklists of activities completed and competencies gained
- Portfolios with work samples demonstrating progress
- Applied performance activities (complete form, conduct survey, etc.)
- oral quizzes; paper and pencil tests
- Learner logs documenting progress/accomplishment (noted in ILP)
- Class summarizing activities undertaken in the last few minutes of class also guide students in monitoring what they've learned and allow for questions.

Implementing the Content Standards:

When planning instruction, instructors will link the content standard language skills and the competencies as it relates to the learner's goals. Competencies can be considered the context/topic of the lesson which leads to the mastery of basic life skills. When we refer to language skills, we are referring to the language needed to master the competency.

Look at the following chart and read the information about two students Lorena and Jose. Looking back to the chart you will be able to see the

Topic	CASAS Competency	Language Skills
Consumer Economics	1.6 Understand consumer protection measures	<p>High Beginning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write simple notes • Ask simple questions to satisfy survival needs • Subject/ verb agreement <p>Low Intermediate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compose simple letters • Participate in routine social conversations in familiar contexts • Simple past tense
Education	2.5.5 Locate and use educational services in the community, including interpreting and writing school communications	<p>High Beginning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write simple notes • Express likes and dislikes • Indefinite articles <p>Low Intermediate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compose simple letters • Use appropriate language in both formal and informal situations • Simple modals

relationship between the competencies and the language skills.

Student Information:

First, let's look at Lorena, who has only been in the U.S. for one month. She completed 10 years of schooling in Mexico therefore; she may advance faster than some of the other students in a high beginning level class who have had very little formal schooling. Through the intake/assessment process, it was determined that Lorena is an independent learner who likes learning new skills and studies English at home when she has the time. She needs to develop her listening and speaking skills. Within a multi-level class, Lorena might help her classmates develop literacy skills during small group work.

Now look at the contrast to Jose, who has been in the U.S. for one year and works with native English speakers. He is in a low intermediate level class, and his listening/speaking skills are higher than most of the other students, because the other students have only limited opportunities to practice English. Jose is hesitant to do the reading/writing work because of his overall low literacy. In order to help Jose meet his long term goal of job advancement, he needs to focus on reading/writing.

Lesson Ideas:

Let's consider Lorena and Jose's skill levels and goals, both short and long term. They are both parenting and will probably have a strong interest in learning language and cultural skills that revolves around their roles as parents, whether it is for business or pleasure. They may be asked in the near future to attend school functions, write notes to school, or may wish to find fun activities for their children.

Lorena is new to the U.S. and may feel uncomfortable in situations where she has the skills, but lacks the confidence to speak English. American ways are still new to her. She may have been very resourceful getting around her native country, but in the U.S., she gets frustrated especially when shopping. Applying these new skills in a real-life context will help her integrate into the community.

Jose needs to practice and improve his reading/writing skills, but he may be more motivated to develop his skills in the context of immediate needs like job advancement. He currently works in customer service at a home improvement center, but struggles with the reading and writing tasks. Despite his employment, he may still be somewhat unfamiliar with the American systems. Learning to read and write letters and applying this skill authentically may expand his understanding of customer service and help him handle complaints more effectively on the job.

Refer back to the Content Standards. What sections were utilized in generating these lesson ideas? What other sections might you use? Discuss these ideas with your partner as a part of your cooperative activity.

Summary:

The Content Standards were written by instructors, for instructors to provide consistency across the state and to assist instructors in the planning and assessment process. It is a user-friendly document that is expected to be used by all instructors when planning local curriculum or daily lessons. The outcome of utilizing this document, along with other appropriate instructional practices will result in learner achievement.